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PROSPECTS OF
Punjab Politics—An
Analysis

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PROSPECTS OF Punjab Politics—An Analysis

By now the dust and din of the Punjab elections must have settled down. The Akalis must have realised their folly of boycotting. The Congress had corrected their earlier stand of last year and have reaped a bumper harvest of successful electioneering. The illusory election on the phenomenal success should, by now, be replaced by the realities of the stupendous task lying ahead in restoring normalcy in the trouble-torn region. If the Congress are sincere in their intentions they should commence with a public declaration of regret about the blunders committed in the past culminating in tragic happenings of 1984. The newly formed government should gird up their loins to undertake the task of reconstruction irrespective of their fragile achievements in the Lame democratic process, which has brought them into power.

It needs to be explained why the process has been called Lame. As it is not compulsory for a voter to take part in the election, and there is plenty of room for resorting to numerous mal-practices,

the resultant outcome of the exercise is not so healthy. In the recent elections to total electorate in the Punjab number, 1.31 crore out of which a meagre 28.5 lakhs have exercised their right with per centage as low as 21.7 against the government's claim of 28 per cent. Out of 28.5 lakhs polled Congress party has won 87 Vidhan Sabha seats with 14 lakh votes (10.68 percent) and 12 Lok Sabha seats with 13.82 lakh votes (10.55 per cent). Has the government elected with less than 11 per cent of total electorate any right to rule over 89 per cent voters?

This short-coming can, however, be condoned if the newly formed government headed by Shri Beant Singh proves its sincerity by addressing the long standing grievances of the region in the present situation when there is Congress government in power at the Centre as well as in Haryana. Under these circumstances it shall be unwise and unbecoming for the Akalis or any other opposition party to deprive the new government of the opportunity to prove its credentials by serving the cause of Punjab and Nation and restore normalcy in the region. 87 Congress M L As and 12 M Ps can certainly influence a large number of people in the Punjab and can help to solve the entire Punjab/ Sikh problem. Those who have not voted because of fear or any other reason can be convinced that an elected government has come to power and their grievances can be taken care of by them. The

Central government can now act immediately to look into the demands of the militants and try to persuade them to come to negotiating table. The accords reached in the past can also be implemented now by taking the new government into confidence.

The newly installed state government can push through the pending programmes, assuage the injured feelings of the Akalis and militants and also carry along the people who did not participate in the election process. The Prime Minister can issue directives to the new government in clear and un-ambiguous terms to redeem the election pledges. Civil and police administration has to be strengthened and freed from all corruption. Dialogue has to be initiated with the opponents to find ways to bring the state back to normalcy. It is hoped that in such a constructive exercise the opposition parties shall not present any obstacles. Congress has got this golden opportunity to implement the Rajiv-longowal Accord in toto. Such performance of the government would force the Akalis to regret their decision to boycott the polls. State government should be assured of full support by the Centre to soothe the hurt feelings of the Punjabis, thereby weaning the misguided elements from militancy. Now the time is ripe to formulate a package of measures as envisaged in the hand bill "Some Loud-thinking on Punjab/Sikh Problem" encompassing the whole amut of intricacies as outlined hereafter. The

Congress government can regain the lustre and overcome many of its handicaps. It shall be folly on the part of Akalis to confront the govt with all their might and threaten with mass movement. Let the political killings and violence be halted giving a fair chance to the new govt to improve the long standing,

Some Loud Thinking on Punjab/ Sikh Problem

It must be declared at the outset the SIKHS are non-separatists, non-terrorists and true Nationalists. They are the most wronged and misunderstood community.

The Prime Minister seeks cooperation of all and sundry to solve the Punjab Sikh problems but is not prepared to listen to the voice of sanity. The facts of the history are that the British were inclined to grant an independent buffer state between India and Pakistan "to enable the Sikhs to have political feet of their own on which they may walk into the current world history." Mr. Jinnah had also offered a separate Sikh state covering territory between rivers Ravi and Jammu provided they agreed to federate with Pakistan on four central subjects.

Pandit Nehru acknowledged that "the brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special considera-

tion" and offered them "semi-autonomous set-up in the North, wherein the Sikhs can also experience glow of freedom" (July 1946). "It was a declaration, a pledge and an undertaking before the world in the nature of an oath which we must keep" (9 Dec 1946). "The various territories of the Union of India would be autonomous units with residuary powers" "The rights of the Sikhs in Punjab should not be jeopardised" (5 Jan 1947). "Special constitutional measures are imperative to meet the just aspirations and rights of the Sikhs" (July 47). As early as March 1931, Mahatma Gandhi has exhorted the Sikhs "to accept my word and resolution of the Congress" and prayed "to unbosom yourself of all doubts and apprehensions", giving "surest guarantee of good faith". In case the congress betrays them, "the Sikhs are brave people. They know how to safeguard their right by the exercise of ARMS". The Sikhs have been betrayed and having been disillusioned some of them have acted on Mahatma Gandhi's advice and now the congress call's it terrorism.

The Sikhs have ignored prophetic warnings of Mr. Jinnah that "You have seen Hindus as your co-slaves, but when they will be masters and you their slaves, you will realise their true nature." They have ignored Mr. Winston Churchill's epithets of "Rescals, Rogues and Free-booters" used for congressmen Inspite of all this and even earlier

record of betrayals in the last four/five centuries, Sikhs preferred to put their lot with the congress.

But after congress antagonism against Sikhs in Nehru Report of 1916, policy enunciated by J.V.P. (Jawaharlal, Vallabhai and Pattabhi) Report of 1-4-1949, "not to concede reorganisation of North India whatever the merits of such a proposal might be Pandit Nehru openly repudiated in 1954 the solemn assurances given to the Sikhs before 1947 with remarks that "now circumstances have changed," Nehrus interview with correspondent of Times London on 2 October 1962 saying that "I would rather risk a civil war than to concede the demand of a separate Punjabi-speaking state. The latest revelations contained in Mrs Gandhi's book MY TRUTH give out her concern about congress found herself in a dilemma" about conceding Akali demand and confessions attributed to Messrs Gulzari Lal Nanda, Sardar Patel Iyenger and Mr Mahavir Tyagi. All this show without any shadow of doubt that Congress was never honest in its intentions for fulfilling any assurances however solemnly given to the Sikhs.

A solution of the Punjab/Sikh problem can be reached today if congress acknowledges all the facts of history stated above and stop confusing the real issues by creating scare about Khalistan and Anandpur Sahib Resolution. It should be publicly admitted that excesses have been committed

against the Sikh Community Terms of settlement shall consist of the following.

DEMANDS OF THE SIKHS

1. Separate identity of Sikh community was recognised by the Mughals and the British. It should be granted distinct identity separate from Hindus, amending Article 25 in the light of Article 29 of the Constitution. By out-of-proportion sacrifices Sikhs have a greater claim to India Nationhood than members of the majority community-
2. In view of sacrifices and sufferings grant 30% weightage to Sikh community as granted to Muslim in Nehru Report of 1916 in spite of less than 2% population. Honour all assurances given to Sikhs by Pandit Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi.
3. Linguistic reorganisation has brought about disintegration of the country. If Railway can be administered with 5 zones and Army can be administered with 5 commands, there is no reason why India cannot have lesser number of administrative units than the present plethora of states. 22 and 9 Union Territories. Abolish Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and allow a semi-autonomous Punjab between rivers Beas, Sutlej and Jamuna along with Punjabi speaking area from Rajasthan federated to India for four subjects—

Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications & Currency See dictionary which India is as meaning of status can be given to per Constitution. If special Federation or Union Jammu & Kashmir under Article 370 why not Punjab.

- 4 All Punjabi Hindus to own their mother-tongue Punjabi. Hindi became national language by majority of one single vote of Mr Gurmukh Singh Musafir, but is being forced down the throat of non-Hindi speaking people.
- 5 Reverse the process of dispersion of Sikh population uprooted from Pakistan. It was pre-mediated pre-planned and ill-conceived to weaken the Sikh Community.
- 6 Release all Sikh prisoners, all Sikh army deserters and remove repressive rule from Punjab.
- 7 Withdraw Block Circular issued by Central Government in 1948 and defamatory circular issued by Army in 1984 regarding Amritdhari Sikhs.
- 8 Remove restriction on wearing of Kirpan by Sikhs in Civil and Army. The right is authorised in the constitution and Defence Service Regulations. Identify Army officers who objected to such authorised usage and punish them.
- 9 Arrange international Judicial Inquiry into Army Action in Golden Temple, repressive rule

in Punjab, loot, arson and mass killings of Sikhs in Congress (I) ruled states and Delhi as aftermath of Mrs. Gandhi's assassination. There can be no let up in forgetting the past. Chances of Inquiry being detrimental to Sikh interests is no excuse for not holding it: Sikh community may be annihilated but the truth must come out and guilty must be punished to restore confidence,

10. Hold referendum on representative character of Shiromani Akali Dal. Congress should stop encouraging and alluring individuals and splinter groups to deny representative character of the Dal, keeping in mind humiliating debacle at Lahore Congress Session in 1922. There is a list of individuals and Sikh splinter groups who are "Tankhabias" to be dealt by the Panthic Court for their anti-Panthic activities.
11. Congress should stop interfering into religious affairs of the Sikhs. Mahatma Gandhi had prompted Sikhs to take up arms if Congress betrays them and assurances are not fulfilled, and now you call it terrorism. Annandpur resolution contains nothing anti-national or beyond Nehru's assurances. Present Congress government is incapable, of managing affairs at home but is at great pains to project its image at international level. Transient success of wrong policies in Assam, Punjab, Sikkim

and Kashmir back-fired in Andhra to humiliation congress had to suffer:

- 12, Congress shall feel uncomfortable with my objective view on problems like (a) refferring river water dispute to Scpime Court (b) management of irrigation and power projects to vest in the state (c) allotment of heavy industry share to Punjab (d) Grant Holy City status to Amritsar (e) Allow installation of high power transmitter in Golden Temple at SGPC cost (f) Allow SGPC to adopt All India Gurdwara code for historic gurdwaras (g) In the absence of common civil code for all Indians authorise syparate Sikh Personal Law like one for Muslims. Sikhs should not be governed by Hindu Code at present. (h) grant second language status to Punjabi in states neighbouring Punjab. (i) Restore the 1974 quota for Sikhs in central and army services. (j) Pre partition capitals of Punjab were Lahore/Simla, post partition were Chandigarh/Simla. having gone to Himachal without fuss. Chandigarh should go to Punjab without involving Abohar/Fazilka. Centre have provided finances of 200 crores for Itanagar in Northe East why not for Haryana If it is not feasible let cosa of new Haryana Capital be shared equally be Centre, Punjab, Himachal and Haryana equally at Rs. 50 crores each. There was alternative propcsal to hand over Meerut District to Haryana take up.

question Sikh Shorries and attached properties with Pakistan Government.

13. Introduce essential reforms by issue of ordinance by the president. These are :—
- (a) candidate to get over 50⁰/o of votes polled to get elected,
 - (b) sponsor candidates on personal merits from lower level,
 - (c) provide recall by electors for misbehaviour,
 - (d) fix sizes of central and state ministries, in proportion to seats in house,
 - (e) abolish upper houses in states retaining Rajya Sabha at the Centre,
 - (f) President, Governors, Lok Pal, Lok Ayukts and Election Commissioner should be elected directly,
 - (g) Re-organise states as Administrative Units on the basis of territory area and population, all to be of almost uniform size instead of present states of giant and pygmy sizes and Union Territories Any special ethnic unit to be contained as one district,
 - (h) Temporary in the constitution should not be extended again and again to become as good as permanent.
 - (i) Cancel Articles 314 and 370 which are discriminatory,

- (j) Privileges of Scheduled Castes and Tribes should be based on grounds of economic backwardness and not on birth.
- (k) Enforce strict moral code for politicians, legislators, governors, ambassadors etc. They should be required to declare their assets.
- (l) One and the same person should not hold party post as well as an office of a kind in the government.
- (m) Enforce principle of Federation or Union between Centre and State with Defence, Foreign Affairs, Currency and General Communications as Central Subjects.
- (n) Centre should seldom interfere into matters of state administration.
- (o) Practice of foisting Governors, Chief Ministers and Administrative Officers on States from the top should be discontinued.

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